

**SUMMARY OF THE
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 30, 2001**

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference, on Tuesday, January 30, 2001. The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Barbara Burmeister of the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. *The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss PT subcommittee issues, method codes update, PT field of testing, analyte rotation, and schedule for the next face-to-face committee meeting.*

INTRODUCTION

Ms. Burmeister reviewed the minutes from the teleconference on January 16, 2001. The committee agreed that the minutes are final. The status of the Action Items is as follows:

- C Ms. Barbara Burmeister said that she still needs to revise the Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) on data reporting and send it to the committee to review.
- C Ms. RaeAnn Haynes drafted a FAQ on the handling of blank results and sent it to Ms. Burmeister. However, she said that it still needs work.
- C Mr. Ralph Obenauf revised the proposal for method codes and sent it to the committee.
- C Ms. Burmeister contacted Dr. Ken Jackson with questions about field of testing.
- C Ms. Burmeister contacted Ms. Lara Autry about proposed dates for the face-to-face meeting.
- C Mr. Larry Jackson arranged for meeting facilities in Baltimore, MD for the face-to-face meeting.

PT SUBCOMMITTEE ISSUES STATUS

Reporting Format

Ms. Marykay Steinman reviewed the status of the Reporting Format Subcommittee. She said that she sent a revision of proposed language for Sections 2.6 and B.5 back to the committee for feedback. Comments were received from Mr. Larry Jackson about items 2 and 3. He explained this by saying that he thought identifiers should appear on each page of the report, not just on the cover page (in case pages got separated). He also thought that the name, title, and phone number of the laboratory contact was only needed on the cover page. The committee discussed the need for including the contact's phone number and agreed it was helpful because phone numbers for laboratory contacts seem to change frequently. They also discussed whether they needed to include the name of the person who approved the sample. A committee member responded that if there was a problem with the sample, then the whole organization is responsible. The committee was reminded that these guidelines are for specifying "at minimum" what needs to be included in the report. The PT Provider can choose to include additional information. A question was raised whether there was need to include a number/code for each analyte and

method. A committee member thought that analyte name and method description was sufficient for the paper copy. (Analyte number and method code are needed for electronic deliverables.) Although the analyte number can change by program, the study type should be in the section header. The committee agreed with this and Ms. Steinman will revise the proposed language.

Quick Response/Corrective Action Studies

Mr. Anand Mudambi said that he is trying to set up a conference call this week or next for the Quick Response/Corrective Action Studies Subcommittee. He said that he wants the workgroup to be able to discuss the issues further before they are brought back up in the PT Committee meeting and that the subcommittee recommendations would be ready by the time of the face-to-face meeting in February.

Data Reporting

Ms. Burmeister said that she needs to make a change to the Data Reporting FAQ. Once it is modified, she will send the FAQ to the committee. She plans to finalize it on February 13, 2001.

METHOD CODES UPDATE

Mr. Ralph Obenauf revised the method codes proposal and sent it to the committee to review. He was unable to attend this meeting, so discussion of the proposal will be delayed until the next meeting.

PT FIELD OF TESTING DISCUSSION

Ms. Burmeister said that she sent an email to Dr. Ken Jackson asking the Program Policy and Structure Committee to keep the PT Committee informed of their progress. Dr. Jackson had responded by saying that they are still working on the draft of Section 1.8.1 and it should be ready around the end of January. Ms. Burmeister told the committee that she thinks Chapter 1 will define “technology” and the analyte groups.

Ms. Burmeister also said that regarding the PT field of testing, she would like to propose “technology-matrix-analyte/analyte group.” She thinks that “technology-matrix-method-analyte/analyte group” will have a negative effect on Performance Based Measurement Systems (PBMS) and that the committee’s attempt to include method in the PT field of testing was voted down at the Sixth NELAC Annual Meeting (NELAC 6). She asked for input from the committee members. Mr. Mudambi agreed with her, saying that the inclusion of “method” was too program specific. Ms. Cindy Nettrour said that she thought that method could be defined through technology, without needing to specify the method number. Mr. Larry Jackson disagreed, saying that the ability to analyze using one method does not qualify a laboratory to analyze by another. Mr. Matt Caruso said that large laboratories tend to use the easiest method, not the most stringent.

Mr. Jackson said that he thinks NELAC should start tracking preparation (extraction) methods. Since the goal is to improve data quality, this additional information would be helpful. Ms. Haynes said that the accrediting authorities do evaluate preparation methods during their on-site

evaluation of a laboratory. The suggestion was made to include a requirement for preparation method in the report format. Another suggestion was then made to create method codes for the preparation methods. No final decisions have been made on this subject yet.

ANALYTE ROTATION LANGUAGE DISCUSSION (SECTION 2.3.2.1 vs. B.1.2.5)

Ms. Burmeister said that the 1998 ratified standards contained language in Section 2.3.2.1 that required PT Providers to make sure that all analytes change over time so that all analytes in a specific group are included at least once every three years. This language was removed in 1999 and language from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Standards that outlined PT sample composition was added in Section B.1.2.5. The new language uses a random number generator and does not require all analytes to be present in a sample in a given period of time. The committee discussed the possibility of the same analytes being unspiked year after year. They considered requiring the PT provider to rotate analytes, however since laboratories may change providers, there is still a problem. While a single provider may be able to keep track of the spiked analytes for a certain laboratory, if they change providers, there will be no control over the analyte rotation. A committee member suggested that NELAC could require the quantitation of each analyte to be reported to the accrediting authority at least once every three years. He said that the laboratory could then request that the sample mix contain certain analytes. The committee agreed that the responsibility cannot be put on the PT provider and must remain with the laboratory. Ms. Burmeister asked committee members to continue thinking about this issue. Discussion will be continued at a later date.

SCHEDULE FACE-TO-FACE COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

The committee's face-to-face meeting will take place on February 26-27, 2001, at the EPA headquarters in Fort Meade, MD. Mr. Mudambi has sent hotel information to committee members. The first day will be for the PT subcommittee issues (including discussion of PT field of testing and interdependent scoring criteria) and the second day will be reserved for the PT Committee. Ms. Burmeister will prepare a draft agenda for the committee meeting and Mr. Larry Jackson will prepare an agenda for the subcommittee meeting. Mr. Jackson will also send the subcommittee meeting agenda out to interested stakeholders (included on his list from the last meeting).

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS RECEIVED

Ms. Burmeister said that she received a call from Mr. Steve Arms from Florida. She said that he is requiring his laboratories to run a PT sample for all analytes listed in the PT field of testing tables. Some microbiology analytes (e.g., total coliform) are listed multiple times under different methods. If an analyte is listed multiple times under different methods, he is requiring them to perform a PT for each method. This concerned her since the current PT field of testing does not include method so Ms. Burmeister requested feedback from the committee. The only reason that multiple methods are listed for microbiology analytes is because the EPA had assigned each analyte/method combination a unique analyte number. After discussion, Ms. Burmeister said that she will respond to Mr. Arms and tell him that his laboratories only need to run one PT sample for each analyte twice a year.

MEMBERSHIP AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

There are no updates from the Membership and Outreach Committee.

NEXT MEETING

The next teleconference for the PT Committee will be held on February 13, 2001.

ACTION ITEMS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 30, 2001

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ms. Marykay Steinman will revise the proposed language on reporting format.	
2.	Mr. Anand Mudambi will arrange a teleconference meeting for the Quick Response/Corrective Action Subcommittee.	
3.	Mr. Larry Jackson will prepare an agenda for the PT subcommittee meeting on February 26, 2001, and send it to the committee and interested stakeholders.	
4.	Ms. Barbara Burmeister will prepare a draft agenda for the committee's face-to-face meeting on February 27, 2001, and send it to the committee.	
5.	Ms. Burmeister will revise the FAQs on Data Reporting and send them to the committee.	
6.	Ms. Burmeister will respond to Mr. Steve Arms from Florida.	

PARTICIPANTS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 30, 2001

Name	Affiliation	Address
Burmeister, Barbara Chair	Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene	T: (608) 265-1100, ext. 107 F: (608) 265-1114 E: burmie@mail.slh.wisc.edu
Autry, Lara	USEPA/OAQPS	T: (919) 541-5544 F: (919) 541-2357 E: autry.lara@epa.gov
Caruso, Matthew	NY State Dept. of Health	T: (518) 485-5570 F: (518) 485-5568 E: caruso@wadsworth.org
Haynes, RaeAnn	Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality	T: (503) 229-5983 F: (503) 229-6924 E: haynes.raeann@deq.state.or.us
Jackson, Larry	Environmental Quality Management, NH	T: (603) 924-6852 F: (603) 924-6346 E: lpjackson@msn.com
Mudambi, Anand	US Army Corps of Engineers	T: (703) 603-8796 F: (703) 603-9112 E: mudambi.anand@epa.gov
Nettrour, Cindy	American Water Works Services Co., Inc.	T: (618) 239-0516 F: (618) 235-6349 E: cnettrou@bellevillelab.com
Obenauf, Ralph (absent)	SPEX CertiPrep, Inc.	T: (732) 549-7144 F: (732) 603-9647 E: robenauf@spexcsp.com
Parker, Faust	PBS&J Environmental Toxicology Laboratory	T: (713) 977-1500 F: (713) 977-9233 E: frparker@pbsj.com
Rhyne, Anne Board Liaison (absent)	TX Nat. Res. Conserv. Comm.	T: (512) 239-1291 F: (512) 239-2550 E: arhyne@tnrcc.state.tx.us
Steinman, Marykay	M. J. Reider Associates, Inc.	T: (610) 374-5129 F: (610) 374-7234 E: kaymjrqaqc@aol.com
Lloyd, Jennifer (contractor support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919) 541-5942 F: (919) 541-8830 E: jml@rti.org